



2014-15 African Travel Advice



Considerations for African travel

The Ebola outbreak has caused concerns regarding travel to and from Africa. The North Dakota Department of Health does not restrict travel, but has advice for those considering travel to Africa.

The NDDoH bases this travel advice upon the following considerations:

- Concern for the health and well-being of anyone traveling between the U.S. and affected African countries, along with their family, friends and employers
- Concerns about medical treatment overseas
 - African countries may not have adequate health facilities to manage illness on site
 - American Embassies may not be able to assist travelers in a timely and adequate manner
- Under extreme conditions, travelers may be asked to perform tasks or function in a manner that they may not be adequately trained to do and may not have the proper equipment to do so safely, putting them at increased risk
- Processes and procedures for returning to the U.S. continue to change
 - Returning travelers are subject to some level of monitoring and possible limitations on activities and travel, which can cause inconvenience
 - Federal regulations may change and require more restrictive measures not currently anticipated by travelers, adding uncertainty and possible hardship to their return
- Once people return to the U.S., if they develop symptoms
 - They will be hospitalized, isolated and tested for Ebola
 - Officials will initiate contact tracing and some level of monitoring and movement restrictions may be necessary for contacts
 - Response can create a burden for contacts, including friends, employers and families, regardless of Ebola diagnosis

NDDoH advises no travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Liberia except for medical workers affiliated with larger groups.

Medical workers are essential personnel and are to be applauded for their efforts in West Africa. The NDDoH supports the work they are doing to stop this outbreak. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a warning against non-essential travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia and has issued a travel advisory for Mali. Humanitarian aid workers are considered essential personnel, but the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) advises that church and other humanitarian groups avoid or postpone travel to the affected countries unless they are providing medical care under the auspices of a larger humanitarian or governmental group. Anyone not directly involved in medical work should not travel to these countries until the outbreak is contained and travel restrictions are lifted.

NDDoH advises avoiding travel to other West African countries.

If the virus migrates, it is most likely to affect countries in close proximity to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Liberia. If transmission occurs in other countries, someone traveling in those countries could be at

greater risk and their return circumstances may change substantially. In an abundance of caution, NDDoH advises that such travel be considered carefully as to its necessity, and postponed, if possible, until the outbreak is over. The remaining countries in West Africa are Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

NDDoH advises no further restrictions on travel to the rest of the African continent.

Travelers going to the other countries in Africa should follow the precautions routinely recommended for people traveling to those areas. Travelers returning from countries not experiencing an Ebola outbreak have no need to self-monitor following their return.

For those who do travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali or Liberia:

- Inform the NDDoH prior to traveling
- Inform their employer of their travel plans
- Coordinate travel with a well-established group (consult USAID at www.usaid.gov or an experienced umbrella group, such as Doctors Without Borders) that routinely operates in these countries
- Follow all recommendations of the CDC for protecting their health
- Inform the NDDoH of their expected return date
- Review their health insurance policy to make ensure that medical care and transport home would be covered in the event of illness or injury

Upon a traveler's return to North Dakota, we ask that they

- Comply with all CDC entry procedures
- Follow all CDC protocols for monitoring their health
- Contact the NDDoH as soon as they return to the state to coordinate their 21 day monitoring period

The NDDoH contact phone number for those who are traveling to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali or Liberia is 1.800.211.4451.

Check the CDC's website for the most current information on travel advisories at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/travelers/index.html>

More information about Ebola can be found at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease/ebola/default.aspx>

If you have any questions about travel, contact the NDDoH at 701.328.2372.